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Ha-i-kyuu!!

Haikyuu!! Light Novel V - Illustrations

*As promised, most of the awesome illustrations of the 5th light novel. :3
Of course my favourites are the Tsukibros ones.*

The natural opponents (re-upload)

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Be natural..... be natural.....!

Kageyama Tobio emitted an ominous aura of nervousness, his movement stiff as he walked on the road.

Even if the summer break had ended, towards the end of August, the weather was still as hot. On an evening after school, the cicadas, which have kept their silence earlier in the day, chirped loudly in the hot weather. However, their chirps did not find its way into Kageyama's ears.

No matter the summer uniform worn by the students he passed, or the sports attire worn by sports club members who ran past him, none of the uniforms were what he was familiar with, hence he became even more nervous. The black t-shirt Kageyama wore absorbed the heat from the sun, causing the temperature on his back to rise. The hot weather together with his nervousness caused him to be covered in sweat in no time. But even so, Kageyama kept his expression unchanged like a mannequin.

Indeed, this was not the familiar Karasuno High School. He had sneaked into the school compounds of Aoba Johsai High School, which he will fight against for the third time in the Spring High representatives' playoff match at the end of October. He had wanted to sneak into the third gymnasium for recon—the same gymnasium they went to during the practice match, hence finding it was no problem.

I'm a student here, I'm a student here..... Kageyama opened his eyes wide, his eyes staring ahead while chanting to himself. His obvious suspicious actions made the students who walked past him stop in their tracks, turning back to look at him instead.

On the other hand, the members of the volleyball club in the third gymnasium had yet to notice Kageyama's infiltration.

Kindaichi Yuutaro took out the scoreboard from the equipment room, his expression slightly tense. Although it was usual to see a lot of people in the third gymnasium solely occupied by the volleyball club, there were even more people today, and they were very noisy. The additional people in the gymnasium today were the school's alumni who were now college students. They had come today for a practice match. The members from Seijoh's volleyball club did the preparation work for the match while peeking at the college students, who were doing their warm up exercises. Kindaichi glanced over nervously towards the college students, observing their appearances.

So tall, so strong. Speaking of which, they should still be having their breaks now? How envious. Just as Kindaichi was pondering over non-crucial stuff like these while looking for other things to do, a shiver suddenly ran down his spine.

".....W-What was that feeling just now?"

"Kindaichi, what are you standing there for. Alright, get out of my way."

Kindaichi raised his shoulders while standing still in an awkward position. Kunimi Akira spoke from behind while pushing the basket full of volleyballs.

"Nothing, I just felt an ominous aura from behind me....."

Kindaichi said truthfully, his eyes fixed to a window pane behind him. But one he saw Kunimi's cold eyes, he was suddenly all shy from what he said just now, then moved his neck slightly, as if to hide his embarrassment. After confirming that there was nothing strange with the half-open window and the blocking net, he mumbled: "..... Perhaps I was just too nervous."

"That can't be helped, given that the college students are all so tall. Just standing there made us feel the pressure."

"Yeah."

The two of them agreed with each other while looking at their opponents for today.

"Are we really playing against these guys....."

"I really don't want to."

Aoba Johsai is known to the other schools as one where the aces gather, and is one of the prefecture's top four, and although Kindaichi and Kunimi are first year students, they became part of the starting line-up with their genuine skills. Kindaichi is a player who is nearly 190cm, his character straightforward. Compared to him, Kunimi is more of a mysterious player. Both of them not only graduated from the same school— Kitagawai Daiichi Junior High, they were great partners as well.

Kindaichi decided to ignore the ominous aura he felt earlier on, placing his concentration solely on the practice match. There was not much time left until the representatives' playoff match, and hence being able to play in a practice match with college students who were much stronger than himself was a great opportunity to him.

“..... Alright!”

He regained his energy and then reminded Kunimi.

“It's rare for the graduated senpais to be here, so please give it your all and don't slack around. It would be bad if they thought we lacked motivation.”

There was actually no need for him to do so, because it sounded more like a nag than a motivation. Kindaichi had meant well, but he was too straightforward. But although the way he put his words across was slightly sloppy, Kunimi could tell he meant well, which was why he chose to listen to him.

“Okay, okay, I get it..... Hmm?”

Kunimi responded impatiently, then suddenly turned his head around before he finished his words. However, all he saw was the bright sky outside the window.

“..... I keep sensing a coldness from behind my back, is it just me?”

“What? You felt the ominous aura too?”

“No, what ominous aura are you talking about, it's ridiculous isn't it? Probably the cooling air blew in, perhaps it'll rain at night. I didn't bring my umbrella, though.”

Kunimi said, but it didn't look like it was going to rain anytime soon, with the

sky bright and cloudless. Kindaichi looked around at the windows, the ceiling and the spectators' seat suspiciously, his eyes stopping at a corner.

His eyes stopped at the door of the equipment room he had just went. The usually shut doors opened slightly, a slit showing.

"I think we did shut the door tightly when we left, didn't we....."

It wasn't anything major, but once they became curious, it became a bugging issue.

"Let me see if there's anything weird."

Kindaichi pointed towards the equipment room, then walked towards it with stiffened legs. Although Kunimi had a face of irritation from not being to comprehend Kindaichi's idiocy, Kindaichi on the contrary was all serious. His face stiffened from his sense of righteousness and anxiety as he placed his hand lightly against the door, then pulled it open with extra force.

"Sorry! Is there anyone in there!"

However, no movements were detected from within the dark equipment room, the equipments all placed in their respective places neatly. Kindaichi had one of his hand holding onto the door while mumbling to himself, slightly dissatisfied.

"Is this all my imagination....."

"Stupid....."

Kindaichi noticed Kunimi walking towards him while a cold smile. He shut the door slowly.

"I felt someone or something must have been hiding inside."

"What is the "thing" you're referring to? And for what reason would the "thing" be hiding inside?"

Kunimi asked irritably, Kindaichi was slightly upset.

"I don't know too, but..... probably those things!"

"those things" you can't be referring to spirits?"

Kunimi's careless words made Kindaichi freeze in his expression.

“..... Spirits? Hey, Kunimi, stop saying weird stuff. I was just thinking if there were lost puppies or kittens, not spirits, stop joking around.”

Seeing Kindaichi staring at him looking upset, Kunimi smiled briefly.

“Oh? Don’t you know? I heard that spirits roam around in this gymnasium.”

“W-What do you mean, I’ve never even heard of it before, what is it about?”

Kindaichi inched closer towards Kunimi, his face angry. His interrogation had Kunimi at a loss for words. Kunimi stepped backwards.

“..... I’m just kidding, don’t be so scared. If we don’t prepare well we’ll get scolded.”

“I, I’m not scared! I’m just.....!”

Just as Kindaichi was about to retaliate, someone called them from a distance — Shigeru waved towards them while asking them to hurry towards him.

“Hey, first years! Come here quick!”

“Coming!”

Kunimi ran, while Kindaichi, after taking a last look around the equipment room, rushed towards Shigeru with quick steps.

—

The practice match with the college students will soon begin. Seeing their opponents from the other side of the court made him realise that his team might not be able to win. When his eyes met with those of the college students’ from beyond the net, Kindaichi avoided his gaze out of nervousness. Just then, Oikawa’s voice sounded.

“Take note— don’t let your momentum slip away.

Oikawa’s nonchalant tone as usual made Kindaichi turn around. Oikawa continued:

“Listen. Firstly, we have to thank the graduated senpais for sacrificing their summer break for us. Then, we should maintain a learner’s attitude.....

“..... Maintain a learner’s attitude on the court. No matter who the opponents are, we just have to do what we usually do.”

Iwaizumi, the team's ace, interrupted Oikawa. Oikawa was frustrated.

"Eh, that was what I was going to say!"

The usual banter between the captain and the vice-captain made Kindaichi less nervous. The other members had no intention of trying to appease the pouting Oikawa, instead taking their positions on the court. Just then, Oikawa lifted his head suddenly.

"Hmm? Feels like someone is watching us, could it be....."

Oikawa's words made Kindaichi stop in his tracks, the aura he felt from just now might not be his imagination after all. He waited for Oikawa to continue what he was saying, his body tense. Oikawa pretentiously looked around his surrounding, then continued saying, his facial expression dramatic.

"..... Could it be girls hiding in a corner waiting to cheer on Oikawa-san? If that's the case, they didn't need to be shy and just show their faces..... Ouch! So painful, Iwa-chan! Why did you hit me on the head?!"

"Do you want to be kicked instead?"

"Of course not!!"

Kindaichi tried to hide his helpless expression, then went to take his position. The college students glanced towards them, their faces relaxed, unsure whether it was due to confidence, or just realising that their opponents were just a bunch of silly people.

However, once the match began, the college students couldn't help but agree with Oikawa's leadership. The match had just begun, and Oikawa, the prefecture's number one setter, had already displayed his overwhelming capabilities. Under his command, the members' abilities were drawn out 100%, their attacks becoming stronger and better.

Oikawa Tooru is an athletic and skillful player. However, his ability as a setter was not because of his natural talent, but a result of his relentless practices and hard work. Although he had a good-looking face and is very popular among the female students, he never slacked in working hard.

The libero barely managed to receive the powerful serves from the college

team. Although he was used to receive Oikawa's strong serves, the serves from the college students was something else, making him frown. Even so, the ball returned beautifully to the setter.

Then, Iwaizumi, Hanamaki, Kunimi and Kindaichi jumped up at the same time.

Oikawa got hold of the situation at the opponent's court in an instant and then made his decision on who should spike his toss. He raised the ball towards the centre of the court. Kindaichi aimed at the ball and took a look at the blockers.

Kindaichi jumped highly, but three college students blocked his sight, their hands stretched out, ready to block.

"..... Urgh!!"

The ball was blocked and it rebounded back to Kindaichi's side. The whistle sounded.

"..... S-Sorry!"

Kindaichi bowed in apology, Oikawa then spoke up, as if to drown away Kindaichi's words:

"Sorry, Kindaichi. My toss was too low."

"Ah, no such thing! Yeah!"

Captain Oikawa's humble tone made Kindaichi stand straight.

—

In spring this year, Kindaichi entered Aoba Johsai High School and joined the volleyball club like he did in Junior High. The first club practice had him in surprise.

—*Eh? That was easy to spike?*

When he was in junior high, Kindaichi was in the same team as "the king on the court"—a self-centered player with immense talent who didn't care about his members. Right now, standing on the same court as Oikawa, Kindaichi was overwhelmed with surprise.

—*Ah, it was indeed easy to spike.*

After playing together a few times, Kindaichi finally understood.

— *The setter is matching himself with me.*

He felt his shoulders, wrists, fingers and all parts of his body moving naturally, as if the ill-fitting shoes and clothes had been removed off of him.

However, Oikawa spoke as if it was nothing:

“There’s no difference between a first year or third year member on the court, our relationship is purely that of an attacker and a setter’s, so if you have any requests just tell it straight!!”

“O-Okay!”

So awesome—no, I think I should put it this way—this is what it is supposed to be all the time? While thinking this way, the demands from the “King” suddenly came into his mind.

—Move faster! Jump higher! Match yourselves to my toss! If you guys still want to win the match!!

Kindaichi thought of the lonely king—Kageyama Tobio. He frowned.

I will defeat you with this team of mine, we will continuously, relentlessly destroy you!

—

On the court for the practice match against college students in the third gymnasium, Kindaichi and Hanamaki at the front row jumped upwards. Oikawa took a glance at Kindaichi, signaling him with his eyes.

“Make your revenge.”

Kindaichi ran up and jumped, the ball was in its best position for a spike.

—We have to get the first point!

Kindaichi’s spike went past the blockers and the ball landed on the opponent’s court.

“Yessssssssss!!”

Kindaichi raised his head, his eyes meeting with the college students who were staring at him furiously. But he longer avoided his gaze, instead observing their movements.

“Alright, one more!”

Kindaichi shouted, his spirits high. The other members patted him on the back.

“Nice spike.”

“Yes!”

His palm was burning from performing the solid spike.

—

During half time, Oikawa joined the college team. Kindaichi and Kunimi became the score tabulators outside the court while they observed the match.

Even when joining a group of more experienced players, Oikawa did not show a particularly excited expression, instead just smiling while introducing himself: “I’m Oikawa—” and then walked into the court. However, faced with players he’d met for the first time and in a situation where each of their abilities were unknown, even for Oikawa, his movements were slightly awkward. Kindaichi could not help but feel anxious.

“Is this really okay.....”

However, the uncoordinated passes and receives from earlier soon disappeared. Unconsciously, Oikawa had become the key person in orchestrating the attacks, as if hypnotising the whole team with his ability. When they succeeded in performing multiple attacks in a row, which would have been impossible for a temporary team, the college students all had a face of confusion. The opponents looked as if saying: “What’s happening? This is tricky?”, while the players in Oikawa’s team looked as if saying: “What’s happening? That was easy?”

“Sorry—but would it be better if the ball was further away from the net?”

“Uh, yeah, it’ll be great if you can do it.”

“I’ll do just that later!”

Establishing his assumptions, then build on upon it and acting on it before making modifications. Oikawa drew out the players’ full abilities with this method—precisely because he had the absolute ability to act on upon his assumptions, he attained such

Unique skill.

Kindaichi stared at the high standard passes and tosses appearing right in front of him, his eyes wide while murmuring.

“..... So great.”

Oikawa senpai was indeed great. Although Kageyama's skills were great too, he was on a totally different level. It was not just because Oikawa senpai in a third year student, but because he had the overwhelming ability in controlling the ball on the court.

Kindaichi took down the scores while feeling proud at the same time. Also, he realised a tingling feeling deep in his heart.

But, what if I can do better?

If I can run faster, jump higher, so much so to the point where I can meet with Kageyama's demands? Kageyama was indeed an arrogant person, but it was a fact that none of us in the group to match ourselves to his ability. If I can jump just like the small guy in Karasuno, what would be the result?

No, but, we were the winners during the Inter High match. Kageyama, although you've changed a lot in Karasuno, we too will continue improving ourselves here. In the upcoming representatives' playoff match, we'll win you guys too—!

Kunimi pulled on Kindaichi clothes, making him come back to his senses. The heat and noise from the third gymnasium suddenly diffused into his body.

“Eh? Uh, what happened?”

“..... How should I put it, the atmosphere today does feel a little creepy.....”

Kunimi continued staring at the match, his face the usual expressionless look as he spoke. Kindaichi grabbed onto the scoreboard and asked:

“W-What is it, Kunimi. Don't go scaring me again, what do you have up against your sleeves.....”

“No, initially I had thought it was because the college students came, but now I don't think that's the case.....”

Kindaichi clasped his lips.

“.....”

“What is it, Kindaichi, don’t keep silent.”

“..... Stop it, spirits and monsters will always go near those who spoke of them.”

“Huh?”

“If we get scared we’re done for.”

“I’m not afraid.”

The two shut their mouths and lowered their heads after receiving a warning from Shigeru. After a while, Kunimi lowered his voice and said:

“..... I kept having this feeling that someone is staring from behind me. However, spirits in a gymnasium like this really does feel out of place.”

“You’re still talking about that..... however, it does make sense.”

Kindaichi placed his hand under his chin while pondering.

“..... Probably it’s the members who quit the club because they could not withstand the practice?”

“That really does make people uncomfortable. Speaking of which, Kindaichi, maybe you made enemies?”

Maligned all of a sudden, Kindaichi frowned.

“Ah? Don’t malign me, why would I be hated upon.

“During the practice match with Karasuno, you had a bit of a banter with Kageyama didn’t you.”

“We didn’t, but.....”

Kindaichi’s stutter did not escape Kunimi’s eyes.

“But what?”

“Nothing, I just thought of Kageyama’s spirit..... just imagining it made me feel very uncomfortable.”

Kindaichi raised his head as he spoke. Kunimi nodded in agreement, his face serious.

“That guy looked scary even on usual days, especially his face.”

Then, both of them looked at each other. Unsure what facial expression of Kageyama came into their minds, but both of them took a sharp breath, their faces pale while trembling.

“So scary, Kageyama is too scary!!”

“Kindaichi, forget about this, let’s concentrate on the match.....”

The practice match with the college students had just started.

—

However, something major happened soon after. During break time, a college student who walked past Kindaichi and Kunimi said:

“The guy whom I passed by just now looked really scary.”

“Ah, that was during the break right? There’s this guy with stiff movements, his whole body emitting a scary aura, just like a zombie. Because he was too scary, I didn’t even dare look twice, but it seemed that guy has been staring into this gymnasium? Surely he won’t dash in here suddenly, right.....”

“That’s too scary!”

Hearing this, both Kindaichi and Kunimi looked at each other.

“Hey, Kunimi. That person..... surely he didn’t sneak into the gymnasium already?”

“If it’s not a spirit but a zombie, even if he did try to sneak in, everyone would’ve noticed.”

Kunimi responded, his mind wavering between “there’re no ghosts in the world” and “what if it’s true”. However, the dumb and straightforward Kindaichi had already begun searching for that suspicious person, he looked around his surrounding seriously. Suddenly, a weird sound came from him as he pointed towards somewhere.

“K-Kageyama is hiding in the equipment room!”

“Huh?!”

Kindaichi pointed towards the equipment room—the door which was tightly shut just now had opened slightly, emitting a sense of “there’s something behind the wardrobe” aura. However, Kageyama was of course not inside. Kindaichi had probably begun imagining things.

“Look carefully, it’s just a slit between the door.”

“D-did, I see it wrongly.....”

Kindaichi wiped away his cold sweat and looked at the equipment room again.

“But, the door opened by itself again, probably someone’s really hiding in there?”

“There’s no one. Forget it, Kindaichi, probably someone went into the room to get stuff.”

There were so many people in the gymnasium, and even if everyone was focused on the match, they couldn’t have not realised a zombie-like person walking in and out of the gymnasium.

“Perhaps so, but it’ll be real trouble if some suspicious person really came in!”

“There’s no such person, I’ll treat you to ramen if there is.”

Kunimi had wanted to end the topic with this, instead it only made the matter worse.

“Ramen?! Then I’d better go take a look!”

“Are you serious? I’m asking you to stop harping on this matter.....”

However, Kindaichi frowned, his expression serious as he asked:

“Let me ask first, can I have miso butter corn ramen?”

“You’re so annoying, pay for the extra sides yourself.”

“That’s a promise!”

Kindaichi walked towards the equipment room after saying. Kunimi stared at his back while mumbling:

“I’m not going to care anymore.”

Kindaichi peeked into the equipment room. The room was very dark, but Kindaichi could tell that nothing had changed inside, but somehow something was not right.

“Something must be hiding inside, calm down and look carefully..... where is it.....”

Some brooms were placed by the wall, with the scoreboard and a classroom table placed by the side. Everything looked the same, but—

“Must be here!”

Kindaichi lifted the top most layer from the vaulting box, then looked inside, but there was nothing.

“Did I get it wrong..... just where is it!”

A net and a box with unknown contents were placed at a corner, and beside it was a gym mat rolled up—

Eh?

Was the gym mat always rolled this way? Shouldn't it be stacked up?

He took a closer look, the gym mat was rolled up loosely, as if a person was hiding inside—

“Must be here!”

Kindaichi opened the door immediately, then rushed into the equipment room and pushed the gym mat onto the floor. Kindaichi started rolling the mat.

“Get out of here, you suspicious fellow! Since you're no spirit, I'm not afraid at all!”

The rolled-up mat rolled into the gymnasium and dropped onto the floor with a thud before stopping. Then—nothing happened.

The members who were practicing were all caught in shock. Kunimi, who was looking by the side, only thought that “indeed, he was scared of spirits”.

“Eh? There's nothing.....

Kindaichi unrolled the mat while everyone in the gymnasium stared at him. Oikawa went up to him curiously.

“Kindaichi, what are you doing, screaming all of a sudden? What do you intend to do with the gym mat? Could it be..... you’re paving the way for me? However, compared to a gym mat like this, a soft red carpet might be more suitable.....”

Oikawa was all smiles while saying when suddenly someone pinched him hard on the nose.

“Huh? What do you mean, paving the way?”

Iwaizumi stood behind him while saying, pinching Oikawa’s nose with a calm face.

“Iwa-chan! Don’t attack my nose!”

“Since you want to talk on a red carpet so much, might as well dye it with the blood from your nose?”

“What gory scene is that!”

Iwaizumi grabbed onto the struggling Oikawa, then shouted.

“It’s all because of your nonchalance that our kouhais are acting weird!”

“You’re just pushing all the blame to me!!”

“Kyoutani is coming back soon, you’d better wake up your idea!”

Iwaizumi said, then let go of his hand. Oikawa sniffed, his nose red. He looked at Iwaizumi.

“Mad dog-chan? However, you probably can’t tame him with just your ability —”

“Oh.....?”

The silence in the gymnasium was once again interrupted by Oikawa’s scream. Kindaichi rolled up the gym mat again, his body trembling.

“S-Sorry, it’s all because of me.....”

Seeing Kindaichi’s uneasy expression, Oikawa wiped off his tears from getting attacked in the nose again, then managed a victorious pose with his hands.

“Kindaichi, it’s okay it’s okay!!”

“O-Oikawa senpai..... you didn’t forget about me despite having your face twisted like this.....”

Kindaichi arranged the mat by himself with more strength.

Honestly speaking, this person right in front of him is really incomprehensible at times, but all I want to do know is to place my complete trust in him and follow his guidance. To be able to play with this team led by a leader like him..... there’s only so much time left I have with these people. To play with the same people in official matches—the upcoming Spring High representatives’ playoff match would be the last. He wants to cherish the time that he has left, learn more things and become stronger, then head to the nationals with this team. No matter if there’re spirits or zombies here, he can’t afford to waste his time of such distractions!

Kindaichi walked out of the equipment room after re-arranging the gym mat. He then announced:

“Alright, let’s practice!”

“Is that for you to say.....”

The dumbfounded Kunimi threw a ball towards Kindaichi, who received the ball and smiled, slightly embarrassed. He passed the ball back to Kunimi.

—

“The first and second years will come on court too, please do your warm up exercises.”

“Yes!”

Kindaichi apologised to the members, then regained his energy and started doing his warm up quietly. After awhile, the window behind him creaked.

“Eh?”

Kindaichi and Kunimi glanced at each other, both of them heard it this time. They turned around slowly, a shadow could be seen moving outside the half-opened window. Both of them whispered.

“Doesn’t look like a zombie.”

Kindaichi opened the window suddenly without waiting for Kunimi’s response. He shouted angrily:

“Who is it! Stop disrupting our practice!!”

A scream could be heard from the other side of the window.

“How! We’ve been discovered!”

“We just wanted to take a few photos of Oikawa-san!”

Far from being suspicious people, two female students wearing the school uniform replied, then ran away hurriedly.

“What, are those Oikawa senpai’s fans.....”

Kindaichi mumbled to himself, his tense expression loosened.

“Eh—Who is it? There’s no need to run away—”

Although it was just for a moment, Oikawa would never miss anything related to him. He came over immediately, waving towards the outside while smiling. Iwaizumi, who was by the side, clenched his fists while saying in a low voice:

“..... Hey, Oikawa.”

“Eh? What expression is that, and why am I getting scolded!”

“Seeing you surrounded by fans makes me very unhappy!”

“What ill logic is that!”

Kindaichi shut the windows while listening to their conversation.

“He’s a very talented person all right.....”

—

Towards where the female students were running towards to stood a guy. He lowered his head while walking excitedly. This is neither a spirit nor zombie, but Kageyama.

“That was close, I nearly got caught..... All the mosquito bites I got from hiding in the bushes.....”

His heartbeat was loud, his ears hot. His heightened spirit was not due to his successful escape, but because he caught sight of Oikawa when playing volleyball.

If comparing against him purely with individual skills, there's no way I will win—Kageyama thought, his feet trembling. However, thinking about how he'll soon have the chance to compete against such strong players made him smile from being excited.

I want the match to start soon, no, we still need a bit more time, but.....

No matter what he thinks, the match will still take place from October 25th to 27th. Everything would come to an end if they lost. If they don't continue winning, they'll never have the chance to play against Aoba Johsai.

To be able to win against Aoba Johsai, led by Oikawa's relentless hard work over the past three years—the upcoming Spring High will be the last chance to do so—

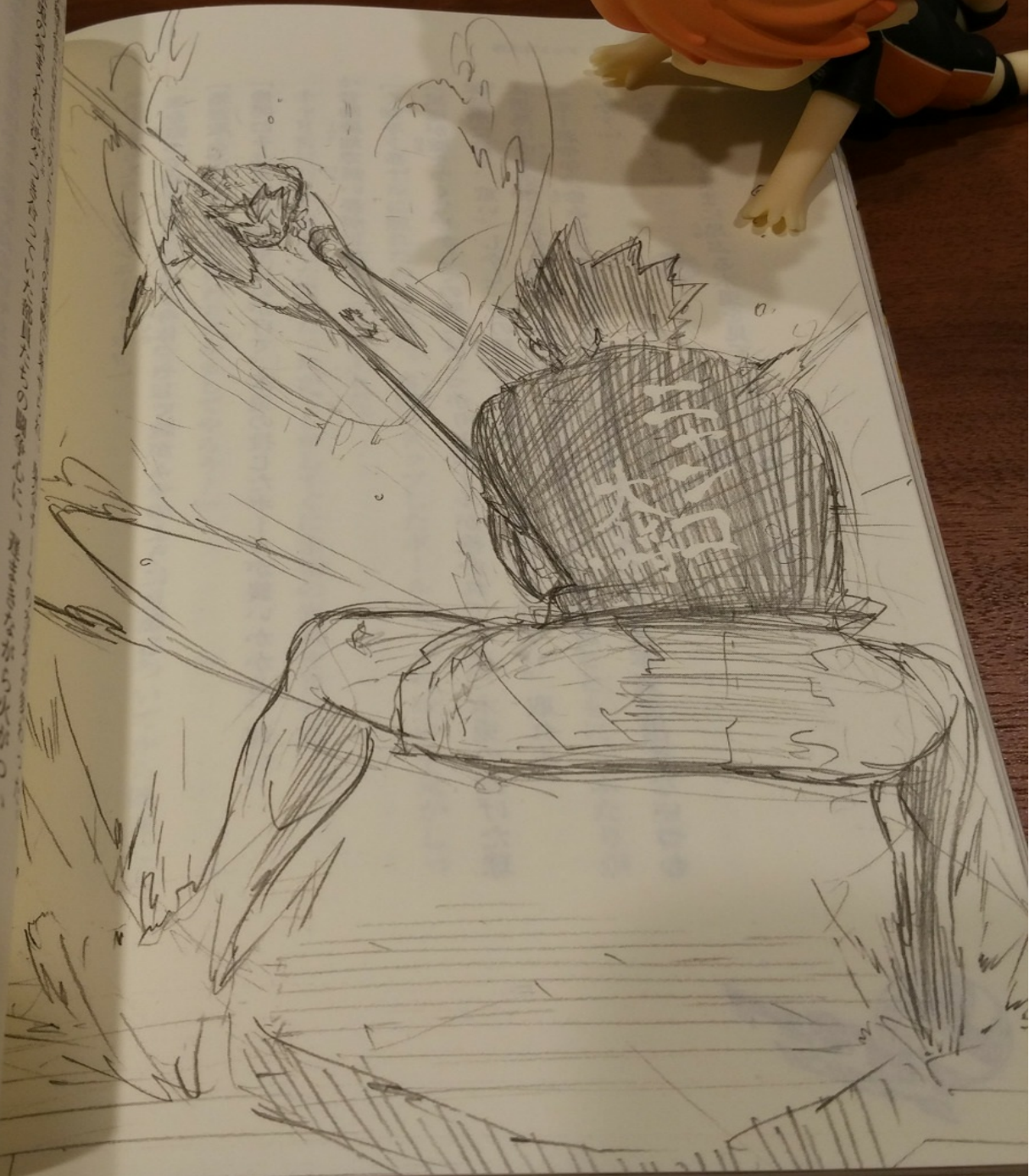
I want to go to the match as soon as possible! And then, we'll win over them!

The bright moonlight shone on the road on a summer night; Kageyama quickened his footsteps in order to return to his members, who are still waiting for him, as soon as possible.

-end-

Haikyuu!! Novel Volume 5: Before Our Representative Playoffs

「言わなければ、この野良猫野郎……」
「バレーもバレーでも負けるかっのー！」
にわかには盛りがあがりを見せるチームメイトに、木兎のテンションがさらにあがった。
「おお、おまえら、やつとやる気になってくれたか！」
あの、相手の想ったままに……



Bokuto. Dodgeball. Team Fukurodani vs. Nekoma. What can possibly go wrong?

- The Fukurodani Academy Group gathered again for the training camp on October 5th at Shinzen Highschool. The first teams to arrive were Fukurodani and Nekoma since they both traveled from Tokyo. The other three teams had not arrived to the gym yet. In fact, Karasuno would not even get there until night time.

- Everyone was tired, but Kuroo started directing his team to set up the nets and equipment so they could practice.

- All of a sudden, Bokuto yelled “OKAY, IT’S DECIDED!” and dashed into the storage room. He came out with a single volleyball and announced that they were going to play dodgeball.

- The Nekoma members were confused and protested [*btw, the game of dodgeball is usually associated with elementary students*]. Bokuto, as a self-proclaimed “Dodgist” [*Translation: Dodgeball + Specialist*], proudly declared that volleyball and dodgeball shared similar spirits.

- The Nekoma members were even more confused. The Fukurodani members all looked very apologetic and told the Nekoma folks to ignore Bokuto. Bokuto, oblivious to his teammates’ verbal assaults, smirked and announced...

Bokuto: Get this, even on the national level, I am one of the top five players...

Someone from Fukurodani: And here he goes again...

Akaashi *ignored all the talking*: I will go set up the volleyball nets.

- Unfortunately, Akaashi was not quick enough, Bokuto caught him by the nape of his neck and yelled “LISTEN TO ME” ... according to Bokuto’s intuition, hidden within the game of dodgeball was *a certain something* that would be equally important to volleyball... yep he could just feel it.

- Even though his words were highly questionable, Bokuto’s absolute confidence actually managed to persuade some Nekoma members as they excitedly wondered what that “important something” was. After all, Bokuto was unquestionably a national level player, so maybe he had some special insights...

right?

- Bokuto was very pleased with himself and Nekoma's positive reaction. In contrast, the people from Fukurodani were very done.

- Lev wasted no time in declaring that he was super strong in dodgeball to an fired-up Bokuto.

- Inuoka and Yamamoto begged Kuroo to accept the match. Kuroo agreed [*the bro-ship is strong*], and told his team that if they were playing, then they were going to play to win. The Nekoma members were very enthusiastic...

- ...except for Kenma. Kenma was very done.

- Akaashi noticed how done Kenma was, and apologized to him. Kenma nervously answered and then tried to get away because OMG SOMEONE IS SPEAKING TO ME WHAT I DO.

- Kenma tried to volunteer for managing the scoreboard, but Shibayama (Nekoma's freshman libero) beat him to it and happily told Kenma that he wanted Nekoma to win, so Kenma should play.

- Kenma seriously considered running out of the school and hiding somewhere, but he did not know the surrounding of Shinzen Highschool.

- Inuoka saw the exchange between Kenma and Shibayama. [*In a sport team, freshmen were usually expected to perform support tasks*] So Inuoka asked aloud that maybe he should be the judge instead of participating in the game... even though he turned his puppy eyes to the max and had "I WANNA PLAY I WANNA PLAY I WANNA PLAY" stamped all over his face.

- Kai volunteered to be the judge because he was the best senpai ever.

- Nekoma's outfielders: Yamamota, Fukunaga and Inuoka. Infielders: captain (Kuroo), setter (Kenma), libero (Yaku) + Lev.

- Fukurodani's outfielders: Sarukui, Washio and Onaga. Infielders: captain (Bokuto), setter (Akaashi), libero (Komi) + Konoha.

- Bokuto and Kuroo competed in a jump ball to determine which team attacked first. Bokuto won. Kuroo was irritated, but he regained his composure quickly and told Bokuto "we will let you start first".

- So Bokuto decided to let his throw do the talking [*while his mouth kept talking anyway*]. Bokuto jumped up high, threw the ball with all his might and screamed “EAT THIS, THE BLAZING SHOOOOT!!”

- Kuroo had to get down on his knees, but he managed to catch the ball.

- Kuroo decided it was the perfect time to provok... I mean, motivate Team Fukurodani [*because best bro evar*]... so he said that the Fukurodani folks were not trying hard because they knew they would inevitably lose to Nekoma. So they were planning to use an excuse... something like “we lost just because we weren’t really into it”.

- The Fukurodani members were fired up and yelled back at the darn stray cat. Bokuto was touched by his teammates’ enthusiasm in the game, and Akaashi tried to point out that weren’t they just doing exactly what Kuroo wanted...? Kenma looked at Akaashi sympathetically.

- It was Kuroo’s turn to attack. Kuroo threw the ball, and Komi reflectively did a receive. (Kuroo: Hey, wait a second, that’s not dodgeball!) Akaashi reflectively set the ball, and Bokuto, of course, reflectively spiked.

- The powerful spike headed towards Lev, and he was confused as to whether he should catch the ball or receive it. So while he was busy panicking, the ball hit him in the shoulder and he screamed bloody murder. Fortunately, Yaku was able to dive and catch the ball before it hit the ground.

- Apparently, now they were playing some kind of volleydodgeball. Kai ruled that from now on, when a player was hit by a ball, if someone was able to catch the ball before it hit the ground, then the player would stay in the game.

- Now more people from both sides started believing Bokuto’s “volleyball kind of sort of similar to dodgeball” thingie.

- Yaku passed the ball to Yamamoto. Yamamoto decided to be clever and spiked the ball towards the chest level, because it would be difficult to receive a ball when the ball was this high. However, he forgot that they were still kind of sort of playing dodgeball and it would **not** be difficult to **catch** a ball when it was flying straight towards your chest... so Akaashi easily caught the ball.

- While the Nekoma members were busy face-palming for their resident idiot,

Akaashi did not miss a beat and quickly countered. The ball hit Lev in the leg, who was busy telling Yamamoto “don’t mind”. Yaku again saved the ball and scolded Lev for not paying attention.

- Akaashi looked at his palm with a disappointed look. Bokuto gave him a firm pat on the back and told Akaashi “don’t mind”. Akaashi nodded.

- Unbeknownst to Bokuto, Akaashi was not disappointed just because he failed to strike out Lev. Akaashi was still wondering why they were doing this silly game, but when he saw a chance to score a point, he seized the opportunity without a question and attacked. He was ashamed at his own pettiness. However, the failure to defeat an opponent that had completely let his guard down... was extremely unpleasant for Akaashi too. Akaashi noted to himself that he could not stand on the court unless he was fully committed. So he sighed and said “let’s continue”.

- The match resumed but the score was stuck at 0 vs. 0. The liberos from both teams were just too good at saving the balls. The match continued to heat up, and it was no longer just a game. The players were playing to win. They had transformed into “Dodgists”.

- Bokuto told Akaashi that Yaku was bad news. Akaashi agreed, since the players were throwing the ball, the ball was traveling slower than a regular spike, making the liberos’ job easier. Bokuto fell into an uncharacteristic silence for a bit, then suddenly said “I got it!” and called for a timeout.

- Bokuto gathered his team and told them he finally got it... *[drumroll please]*... **dodgeball was different from volleyball!!**

- The Fukurodani side exploded.

- “That’s different from what you said before! Just don’t open your mouth anymore!” “I am an idiot, I believed Bokuto I am an idiot”

- Captain Obvious tried to explain himself before his teammates murdered him. What he meant was that dodgeball was different from volleyball... so the libero. They needed to go after the libero.

- The other members were still a little confused. Akaashi translated *[he is fluent in Bokuto]* that unlike volleyball, in which you tried to avoid hitting the ball

towards the libero, right now they should throw the ball directly at Yaku first so he could not follow up and make those saves.

- That actually sounded like a good plan. Bokuto proclaimed himself to be a genius. Komiyan (Bokuto's nickname for Komi) complimented that Bokuto did a good job using up his lifetime worth of brain cells. Bokuto weeped.

- The game resumed and Yaku quickly realized the Fukurodani folks were aiming for him. He had to focus on dodging... until he ordered Lev to make his gigantic goofy self useful and be a meat shield. Lev complained that he did not want to get hit anymore because it hurt, and Yaku was like go catch the freaking ball then quit whining.

- Nekoma could not just dodge; they needed to gain possession of the ball in order to counter attack. So Kuroo told Lev to stop running, intentionally get hit and let Yaku catch the rebound. Lev kept refusing (I~DONT~WAN~NA~), but Kuroo put his hands on Lev's shoulders, and solemnly told him that Kuroo expected a lot from Nekoma's upcoming ace. Lev's eyes lit up and he was like yes! let me get hit!

- Lev leapt in front of Bokuto's throw [*rest in pieces you big Russian kitty*] and Yaku was able to make a catch (Yaku: I will avenge you). Bokuto was getting more and more agitated [*Uh oh*]. Akaashi tried to calm him down. As usual, it was not working so well.

- Yaku gathered his team and told them his plan. When the game resumed, Kenma was holding the ball. Team Fukurodani knew that Kenma could not be underestimated and anticipated the attack... but that itself was actually the trap. Right before he threw the ball, Kenma pulled a feint and passed the ball behind him over Kuroo and Lev's heads. Bokuto realized that he could not see behind Kuroo and Lev's wall and now Fukurodani could not predict the next attack's direction. Yaku yelled at Lev to get out of the way, and then threw the ball at Konoha. Komi was unable to save the ball.

- Bokuto was highly irritated and started stomping his feet. All of a sudden, his yelling stopped and he collapsed on the floor... Fukunaga (even his teammates forgot he existed) had silently picked up the ball and silently threw it right at Bokuto's face.

- The strike-out was painful for Team Fukurodani... well, the face-ball encounter was painful for Bokuto physically. Having two members out of the game was painful too. But Fukurodani was having a crisis because the fail was caused by Bokuto's own carelessness... meaning Bokuto could be entering his infamous Dejected Mode. Interacting with (potentially) Dejected Mode Bokuto was an extremely dangerous job that would be best left to the professional.

- So everybody looked at ~~[the owl whisperer]~~ Akaashi. Akaashi took one for the team and went to check on Bokuto, who was still lying motionless on the floor. Bokuto bounced back up. Despite having a nosebleed, Bokuto was in a good mood, because he realized that he was still in the game. *[Dodgeball rules discourage intentional head shots for obvious reasons; so if a player gets hit in the head, it is usually not considered a strike-out]*

- If it's worth doing, it's worth overdoing! Bokuto yelled "EAT THIS, SUPER STRONG SPECIAL SHOOOOT!!" and threw the ball with all his strength. The ball turned into a curve ball *[Bokuto: OMG I **am** a genius]* and flew somewhere at full speed... until it was stopped by the face of Team Shinzen's captain. (Poor guy came looking for the two teams)

- After everyone was done getting scolded by the couches and advisers, they started setting up the volleyball nets and equipment. Bokuto approached Lev and suggested that they played dodgeball again when Karasuno got there. The idea was vetoed by everybody, because if there was one thing they could all agree on, it's that Karasuno was a troublesome opponent. *[Karasuno + competitive anything = potential disaster]*

RANDOM THOUGHTS: Bokuto improves every chapter by approximately 150%. And you know what? Bokuto can be quite charismatic and insightful, he should get more credits as a captain and a player :)

Brothers (re-upload)

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The view from outside the window was an endless sky of blue, the temperature probably above 30 degree Celsius, but the office was cooling. Yet precisely because of the air conditioning, it felt even more like summer. Akiteru loosened his tie and then looked up at the clock on the wall, it was near knock-off time. He tried his best to complete his work early, because there was practice at night.

“Okay...”

Akiteru sat on his chair, his hands stretched out, then picked up his documents. Just then, his cell phone on the table rang, it was Kei.

Akiteru raised his eyebrows, then stared at his brother’s—who was seven years younger than him, incoming call. Receiving such a rare call from him made Akiteru slightly curious. He was wondering if anything had happened to his family, and picked up the phone immediately.

“What is it?” He spoke while walking hastily towards the corridor. Compared to the office, the corridor was warmer. He heard his brother’s muffled voice from the receiver.

“Kei here, I’m going there today.”

“Eh? By today you mean..... the volleyball practice?”

“Yeah, that’s all.”

His younger brother was about to end the call immediately after finishing what he said, Akiteru stopped him immediately.

“W-Wait a minute, don’t hang up. I’ll go pick you up at about—”

Once they set the time and venue for meet up, Akiteru ended the call. He sighed, then relaxed his shoulders, and felt nervous all of a sudden.

Akiteru had previously invited his brother for practice, but he didn’t force him to come, because his brother was not the kind to give in to pressure, and anyway

he himself wasn't a respected elder brother, lacking in authority. When he went back home during the public holiday for Obon*, although they talked to each other, that was already some months ago.

* Obon = Lantern festival

But even if that was the case, he is still his elder brother and considered quite a veteran in volleyball. Seeing his brother at a loss with his club activities, Akiteru had to help him.

"Thank god I invited him."

Akiteru mumbled to himself, then returned to his desk, picked up the documents again, and completed his remaining work with increased speed. He was looking forward to his brother joining him with his practice today, yet at the same time slightly afraid. Anyway, if he arrived late, his brother might just decide not to go anymore, hence he must not work overtime.

Akiteru suddenly stopped what he was doing. He then pressed on the button on his cell phone to confirm today's date.

"August coming to an end soon..... If I want to look for it, I have to do it soon."

—

Akiteru parked his car in front of the bus stop where they were supposed to meet. Just then, someone knocked on his window. His younger brother peeked into the car. Akiteru switched off the radio in his car as he unlocked the door. His younger brother, who was wearing a t-shirt, awkwardly greeted him.

"Good evening."

He then lowered his body and entered the car, the hot and dry air, together with dust, gushed in before he shut the door.

"Let's head out then. Are you hungry?"

Akiteru asked. His younger brother leaned on the backrest as he glanced at the bag placed beside his legs, and nodded slightly. His expression was unwilling, as though he was forced to join in the practice. But then again, he was the one who initiated to join Akiteru in the practice.

Although the reason he suddenly asked to join the practice was unknown, it

was most likely due to him doubting in his own skills. After all, Kei would have to represent his school in the upcoming Spring High representatives' playoff match —

Once he started the engine, Akiteru felt his younger brother, who was sitting beside him, emitting a sense of awkwardness and nervousness. To lighten the atmosphere, Akiteru took the initiative and asked.

“..... Um, has school started?”

“Yeah.”

“I see, it must be tough then?”

His younger brother kept his head low, then elaborated.

“Well, there's lessons, so it is more relaxed compared to during the summer break.”

“Oh, that's true. Having to spend the whole day on club activities, I probably wouldn't be able to take it..... Right, Kei, have you been on my car before?”

“Eh? This is my first time.”

“Is that so. How is it? it's not bad right?”

Akiteru smiled proudly. Kei frowned and said:

“..... I think it's okay. Can you look to the front.”

Even without his younger brother's reminder, Akiteru would take care to look to the front. The traffic lights on the road in the evening shone brightly. Once they were past a bend, they could see the practice venue for Kaji Wild Dogs, which Akiteru is a member of—the community gymnasium. Kei glanced at Akiteru silently as he rolled up his sleeves while reminding him to “greet the others properly”, then turned his steering wheel.

“And that's what it is. From today onwards, my younger brother will be under your care too. Hey, greet everyone.”

Seeing Akiteru pressing down his younger brother's head, the other members smiled. Kei, slightly upset, glared at his brother, who was slightly shorter, then lowered his head, irritated.

“..... Please take good care of me.”

The adults who had gathered in this gymnasium this evening varied in age, and compared to the Karasuno neighbourhood association team led by coach Ukai, the members were older, with Akiteru being one of the youngest members in the team.

“What? Is he joining us?”, said Akaizawa enthusiastically, who looked to be in his 30s and the oldest member in the team.

“Uh, no.....”

“The Spring High representatives’ playoff match is coming soon and he wanted to practice more. Ah, he is currently in Karasuno too.”

Akiteru spoke on behalf of his stuttering younger brother, while his younger brother was all surprised as he stared at him, because he never would have imagined hearing his older brother mentioning his high school, and although they rarely talk on usual days, he had always thought that both of them were avoiding mentioning his high school on purpose. It seemed that he was thinking too much.

“I see, isn’t Karasuno different from before already?”

Akaizawa’s straightforwardness made Kei’s eyebrows twitch.

— The fallen champions, the flightless crows.

Even if he had always known that was what the others thought, Kei still felt slightly irritated when someone spoke like that in his face. Akiteru elbowed Kei, who kept silent while looking upset.

“..... I’ll take my leave.”

Kei bowed, then walked away.

“Oi—wait a minute!”

As if to drown away Akiteru’s shout, Akaizawa shouted “We’re starting!”, and the practice for Kaji Wild Dogs started.

However, Kei was completely butchered by the adults once practice began. Akaizawa and the others’ spikes easily defeated him, and it wasn’t even just him

being unable to block them—he was literally blown off by the impact. It wasn't as if he couldn't guess his opponents' moves, or that his height was not put to good use, but he just wasn't their match. Kei was very clear that the body of a 15 year old is still immature, their strength level different from adults. However, was this the only reason why he couldn't get past the adults?

Akiteru thought that Kei always had a bad habit of convincing himself that he would not win against anyone who is obviously stronger. He couldn't comprehend what it meant to be able to see the view from the top past the blockers, or what it felt like to have his whole body trembling with excitement, or the feeling of getting hooked onto something once he succeeded in it.

Perhaps it was due to my own weakness that made Kei this way, and if this were really the case, then I would have the responsibility of helping him break out of his bad habit. I had let him see me in my most embarrassing moments, but what matters now is to let him see my cool side, too. Let Kei witness me giving my all and putting in everything that I have to achieving something—

Akiteru glanced towards his brother.

Kei continued to be pestered by Akaizawa, his expression clearly saying “I want to get back home as soon as possible”. Akiteru truly believed that as long as his younger brother took the initiative to interact with the adults, even if his skill were far below them, he wouldn't give up that easily either. Until he gets what he wants, he'll continue making use of his time here to achieve something meaningful.

“One more!”

Akiteru shouted from behind his younger brother, as if giving his younger brother, who had long surpassed him in height, that push he needed.

“Where are we going to drink today?”

“I drove here.”

“Get a driving assistant then.”

Once the practice ended, the adults started discussing where to head to for a drink while changing their clothes. Akiteru didn't change back to his business wear, instead putting on a new t-shirt he had brought along. He smiled bitterly while listening to their conversation, then waved towards his teammates.

“I’ll take a leave first.”

Akaizawa asked:

“Tsukishima is not coming with us today?”

“I can’t, I have to send this fellow home.”

Akiteru replied while pointing at his brother. “I see,” said Akaizawa, as he smiled bitterly while inching closer to Kei. Kei took a step backwards silently, Akaizawa went closer to him again, then said:

“We’ll have barbecued meat next time, the younger brother should come along too, I’ll treat you to a lot of meat, okay?”

“..... Oh.”

On the noticeboard was the booking status for the gymnasium, as well as flyers for recruiting new members. Kei turned around, then nodded towards everyone as he walked away. The other members, who were excited from heading out to drink afterwards, waved towards the two brothers.

“Please come again!”

Once they said their goodbyes, they put on their shoes, then walked towards the car. The bright moon hung in the sky, the smell of grass strong. The moonlight shone on the row of sunflowers along the car park.

Kei got into the car, then heaved a sigh of relief. He mumbled to himself:

“Why does everyone like to force others to eat meat so much.....”

“Everyone?”

Kei looked at his brother, then fell silent.

“..... No, nothing.”

Kei recalled that barbecue party on the last day of the summer training camp, with the captains forcing him to eat more meat. Having completed an unfamiliar set of training, Kei was already exhausted, and didn’t want to explain further because he thought it was troublesome, and hence kept silent instead. Barbecuing meat would only make the smell stick to his clothing, not to mention how troublesome it is to use disposable cutlery. The meat were often either

burnt or undercooked, and even if he did manage to find a well-cooked piece, others would have grabbed it immediately. Telling his brother these things felt pointless, anyway.

Akiteru, unaware of what Kei was thinking, smiled and said:

“Meat, huh..... do you want to have some before heading home?”

“No.”

“Don’t stand on ceremony, uh..... but it’s not pay day yet, I wonder how much money I have left for this month, but if it’s a slightly cheaper restaurant.....”

Akiteru mumbled to himself, thinking about his own finances, while starting the engine. Kei reiterated again:

“It’s not a matter of standing on ceremony, I really don’t feel like eating it.”

“I see.”

Akiteru started the car, slightly regretful. On the familiar road heading back home, the atmosphere felt different with his younger brother sitting beside him. After driving for a while, Akiteru asked:

“..... Speaking of which, why did you suddenly decide to come here for practice? You should still be in club when you called right?”

“..... Nothing in particular, I just thought of it suddenly.”

“Oh, there you go again, rebellious phase.”

“.....”

Kei looked out the window glumly and stayed silent. There was nothing to see outside, yet he stubbornly turned his head around. There was nothing he could do anyway—if he can become obedient just getting reprimanded by adults, it wouldn’t be considered the rebellious phase, then. Akiteru didn’t mind much, he continued saying in a mocking tone.

“Hmm—even if you felt like saying later, I won’t hear any of it already.”

“..... There’s nothing.”

This was by no means a lie. Kei was only slightly irritated by Hinata earlier, who said something along the line of “If Tsukishima can’t do it, then I will stop

Ushiwaka". Even if asked what had happened, he could only say nothing did.

However, although that was what he said, Kei was clear that he'd not improve just practicing with the adults with no fixed goal in mind. However, he didn't know what else he could do, his anxiety growing stronger and stronger by the day.

During the summer training camp, Bokuto from Fukurodani had pointed out "you're not enjoying volleyball because you suck at it". Perhaps like what Akiteru said, he had convinced himself that losing to someone stronger was logical. Although unwilling, Kei could not imagine himself successfully blocking Ushijima, Bokuto or Akaizawa.

It's only natural to lose if one is lousy at it, and hence find it not interesting.

Kei did not run away from this cruel yet infuriating fact. He pondered carefully, thinking just what was it that he lacked.

"Um, Ni-chan."

Akiteru responded while looking in front.

"Hmm?"

"..... Forget it, nothing."

"Is it?"

Akiteru didn't ask further, his younger brother kept silent too. However, between the two of them, the awkwardness from earlier on was long gone. The two of them were silent, each of them deep in their own thoughts as the car finally arrived in front of the house.

Just as Akiteru was stopping his car in front of the door to let his younger brother alight, their mum, as if waiting for them, walked out to the door.

"Akiteru, want to come in?"

Akiteru rolled down the window while his mum ran towards him.

"I think not, it's a bit late already, and I still need to work tomorrow."

"Is that so."

"I'll come back for dinner soon."

Akiteru said, then waved his hands as he restarted the engine. Returning back to his old house, the moon and stars looked exceptionally beautiful. After driving for a while and reaching the prefectural road, Akiteru suddenly remembered something. Right, I have something I definitely have to buy.

“If only I could get off work punctually tomorrow, although quite impossible.....”

—

In the evening the next day, Akiteru went to the department store just before it closed. He appeared to have come right after work, his blazer hung on his forearm as he listened to the staff talking, his face slightly tired. In the end he didn't get what he wanted, hence he walked out from the shop while the staff bowed.

Akiteru waited for the lift to get down, then looked at his cell phone's screen, slightly troubled, as he continued searching for shops that are still open. Just then, the lift door opened.

“I should try the other shops too.....”

Akiteru walked out from the department store, then ran in small steps to the shopping street. Walking amongst students with large sports bags slung around their bodies and noisy drunkards on the street, Akiteru headed towards the front. However, when he arrived at the shop he was looking for, the shutters were already half-down, the owner turning off the lights behind the signboard, then cleared the display shelves. It looked impossible for him to get into the shop.

“It's really impossible to shop after working hours.....”

Looking around, the only shops that were still open were the fast food restaurants and gaming arcades. Akiteru sighed, sat down on a bench on the shopping street and stretched his legs. The spot on his leather shoes bothered him. He thought of how he had intended to polish his shoes on a bright, sunny day, but he hadn't had the time to do so.

“..... Anyway, I'll grab something delicious to eat before heading home.”

Akiteru regained his energy, then stood up and walked into the crowd once

again.

—

“Right, is your younger brother not coming today?”

On a Saturday afternoon when Akiteru was just hanging up the net in the gymnasium, Akaizawa asked him. On the weekends, the members of Kaji Wild Dogs would usually gather after noon, wrap up their practice in the evening and then head over to the bar for a drink. However, such schedules could only happen if the members of other volleyball clubs weren't gathered there as well.

“Yeah, he said he's busy.”

Akiteru stopped at what he was doing while answering. The other members gathered around too, their faces sly as they blamed Akaizawa.

“See, it's all because Akaizawa was such a bully.”

“Young boys like him hate being treated like this.”

“W-What..... Is it my fault?!”

Akaizawa's confidence wavered under his teammates' constant blaming. Akiteru explained:

“That's not it, that fellow said he was going to Tokyo for a training camp.....”

Then, he added on to his words with a provoking tone:

“Although Kei looked to be lacking in drive, he's actually very unwilling to lose. He'll continue coming until he succeeds in blocking Akaizawa's spikes.”

“Unwilling..... to lose? I can't tell.....”

Akiteru smiled while looking at Akaizawa, who tilted his head. After he was done setting up the net, Akiteru said:

“Let's look forward to the end of the training camp then.”

“..... Yeah, a young person like him still has a lot to improve on.”

Hearing Akaizawa's emotional words, the teammates starting making fun of him again.

“Oh, it appeared! An uncle statement!”

“Who’s the uncle, I’m only 33, okay!”

“That makes you an uncle then!”

Akaizawa was just about to give chase to the others, who were running everywhere when Akiteru suddenly called him. If it’s Akaizawa, he’ll probably know something.

“Uh, Akaizawa, I have something to ask you.”

“Hmm? What is it?”

Akaizawa put down his clenched fist and turned around.

“Actually, I’m looking for something.....”

Akiteru told him what he had been troubling over for the past few days.

“Oh, if that’s what you’re looking for, I remember.....”

After listening to what Akiteru was looking for, Akaizawa gave his suggestions like a dependable senior. Although he was quite the troublesome guy, he liked to be depended on, and is a very gentle person.

“Oh..... so there is such a shop.”

“Yeah, if you have any other questions, feel free to look for me.

—

In the midst of September, the traces of summer were long gone, the scenery slowly replaced by those of autumn’s. Despite so, Akiteru was still very much occupied by work and volleyball practices, his daily life unchanged. His younger brother in high school went all the way to Tokyo for the training camp despite just ending his summer break, and on top of it he has his usual club activities and practices, his schedule packed as well. As a member of the working class, the kind of life his younger brother is leading now made him envious, but at the same time he was very proud of his brother’s change in his attitude after the camp.

It was unsure how many times has it been since Akiteru first brought his younger brother to practice together, with Kei first initiating the meet up over a month ago. Although unclear how Kei and his teammates felt, from his viewpoint

as the older brother, he could see that Kei had gotten closer to people around him.

“Hey, Tsukishima’s younger brother, how’s your training camp? Did you bring anything back from Tokyo?”

During break time, the teammates gathered behind Kei and asked. Kei wiped off his sweat, then turned around.

“..... No, if we had taken the bullet train there I could have gotten souvenirs, but our coach drove us there.”

“But surely you guys went to the resting stops?”

“Then they won’t be souvenirs from Tokyo, but from the Tohoku region.”

“Is that so? That’s true, too.”

Kei nodded slightly, then took a sip of water before beginning his practice again.

Akaizawa was waiting for him on the court. Although there was still quite a difference in strength between the both of them, if he wanted to win against the aces from Shiratorizawa or Aoba Johsai and advance into the nationals, he shouldn’t tell himself that he couldn’t win Akaizawa anymore.

Akiteru looked at his young brother on the court.

After confirming Akaizawa’s run up, Kei jumped upwards. A loud sound vibrated across the gymnasium as the ball fell beside Kei’s feet.

The way his younger brother played after returning from Tokyo had changed significantly. In the past, he always felt that he couldn’t block the spikes, but now he emitted a different aura, as if wanting to shut out his opponents completely. Just like now, although he didn’t succeed in blocking Akaizawa’s spikes, his eyes were full of dissatisfaction.

Those eyes.

Akiteru recognised those eyes clearly. Once the ace of his team in junior high, Akiteru could tell that those who have such eyes would improve by leaps and bounds in the future—

“I can tell that your timing for the blocks have improved a lot, eh?”

After practice, on their way home in the car, Akiteru told his younger brother, who lowered his head and responded, slightly irritated:

“I can’t tell.”

“Oh, someone’s shy, someone’s shy.”

“I’m not shy..... And besides, I haven’t even succeeded once in blocking Akaizawa-san’s spikes.”

A stark contrast from his silence while on the car previously, Akiteru was slightly taken aback by Kei’s enthusiasm. He gripped tightly onto the steering wheel once again. His younger brother’s growth felt like his own growth, and this made him happy. Hiding his excitement, Akiteru said calmly:

“That’s right, but at least you don’t get blown off anymore.”

“Yeah.”

“Noticeable growths like this are good.”

Akiteru’s straightforward praise moved Kei slightly. Kei lowered his head again.

“..... I don’t notice them myself.”

“Haha, you’re the one playing, surely you can tell.”

“.....”

His gloomy younger brother is constantly growing. Akiteru couldn’t help but say:

“I won’t admit defeat too.”

“Huh?”

“I mean to say, I won’t lose, so don’t you dare lose too.”

Indeed, the best time of his life was not during his junior high, but in the future. Once he thought this way, his mundane, routine days suddenly felt all exciting and irreplaceable, his fatigued body from practice earlier all re-energised in that instant. He suddenly thought of polishing his leather shoes clean.

“I have no idea what you’re talking about.....” Kei mumbled, Akiteru

continued:

“Right, I’ll send you home tomorrow, want to stay over at my place?”

“Fine by me, but why?”

Akiteru stopped in front of the red light, then smiled as he said:

“I want to polish my shoes, you should wash your sports shoes too.”

“I want to go home.”

Faced with his younger brother’s cold rejection, Akiteru glared at him half-jokingly.

“Hey, the younger brother should learn to treat the older brother with respect.”

“I don’t want to.”

Kei took out his cell phone, then showed Akiteru the weather forecast for tomorrow.

“Also, it’ll rain tomorrow.”

“Tch.....”

The traffic light turned green, the familiar scenery outside the car started moving as well. For the past month, Akiteru had been driving along this road—the road leading to his old house, with his younger brother by his side. The rice crops by the side of the road swayed in the wind, waiting to be harvested. Autumn had arrived.

—

Just like what the weather forecast predicted, it rained in the afternoon. Akiteru drove alone, the raindrops falling on the windshield, gliding along the surface. He drove past the bridge, his mind thinking that with every rain now, the temperature would only drop further by the day.

“To think there’s a specialised shop like this opposite the river.....”

He was heading towards the spectacles shop Akaizawa had told him about, and soon he saw the shop sign, dripping wet in the rain. Akiteru parked his car, then dashed into the shop without bringing his umbrella.

“Um, I’m looking for sports glasses.”

“What type are you looking for? If it’s for running or cycling, there’s the lighter model here.....”

Akiteru interrupted the shop staff.

“Nope, it’s for volleyball!”

“Then, you must be looking for one that are shock-absorbent.”

Based on the staff’s recommendation, Akiteru tried on a few glasses, trying to pick one his younger brother would like.

He probably won’t like those that are too fancy in design. Kei is suitable with designs that are cool and simple.

While still choosing, Akiteru saw himself with glasses in the mirror and got quite a shock. *Do I really look this alike with Kei?*

No, that’s not it, we’re not alike at all, I’m not as unfriendly as him. Also, it should be the other way round, Kei should be the one looking like me.

Akiteru thought to himself while picking up other glasses.

I wonder if Kei would be happy from receiving the glasses from me? His birthday had just passed; I wonder what I should say to him while giving the glasses to him.

This was Akiteru’s first time spending so much time on a present for his younger brother. Akiteru thought to himself while browsing around the shop, half imagining Kei’s surprised look when he receives the gift later.

The sound of rain came from outside. The rain will probably stop tomorrow, changing into the cooling weather in autumn.

In less than a month, the Spring High representatives’ playoff match will begin.

The national stage that he wasn’t able to stand on had now become his younger brother’s goal. Kei will get to wear the Karasuno jersey that he didn’t get to wear.

Still bitter?

He couldn’t dismiss that feeling completely, but compared to feeling regretful

over such minor things, Akiteru felt more pride for his younger brother. He sincerely hopes that his younger brother will win the match.

The huge stage, the strong opponents, the actual touch of the ball, and the heightening atmosphere due to one's actions—

Akiteru trembled, feeling as though he was going to be the one on the court. He smiled bitterly, then thought to himself—

Kei can definitely make it.

Because he's my brother.

Haikyuu!! Novel Volume 5: Before Our Representative Playoffs



Once upon a time there were three very different little girls who grew up to be three very different women with three things in common: they're brilliant, they're beautiful, and they work for me. My name is Char... I mean, Crow.

Screenwriter & Director: Ennoshita Chikara

Camera: Akaashi Keiji

Art Director: Kamasaki Yasushi

Music: Narita Kazuhito

Starring: Tanaka Saeko, Shimizu Kiyoko, Yachi Hitoka, Azumane Asahi, Takeda Ittetsu, Tanaka Ryuunosuke (uncredited), Yamamoto Taketora (uncredited), Nishinoya Yuu (uncredited)

- John Bosley was the assistant to the unseen millionaire, Crow. John was waiting in the office for our three beautiful private investigators as they were summoned for a new case.

- Shimizu was the first to show up... on a race horse. She greeted Azumane ("right now my name is John not Azumane...") and explained that since she was running late, she came straight from a competition. Which she won, of course. ~~Azumane~~ John was ~~terrified~~ surprised by the horse and asked Shimizu to take it away.

- Yachi showed up... in a swimsuit. She told Azumane-san ("it's John Bosley...") that she was running late, so she came straight from a competition, which she won, of course. Shimizu handed her some clothes.

- Last but not least, Saeko nee-san showed up in a sexy military uniform completed with a whip. She greeted Asahi (who gave up on John) and explained that since she was running late, she came straight from her part-time. Asahi looked at her outfit + whip and was too afraid to ask what kind of job she had, but Saeko actually just worked as a waitress. And she won (sales competition), of course.

- They settled down and Crow spoke to the girls through a speaker. Date Heavy Industries was hiring the Angels because someone had stolen confidential information from them. Shimizu elaborated that Date Heavy Industries was one of the world's leading companies in science innovation. Yachi fangirled Shimizu for her world leading beauty and knowledge.

- Crow asked Asahi to explain the case in details and signed off. Asahi brought out some cakes and tea before they started, and Saeko complimented that he would make a good son-in-law.

- The only clue left at the crime scene was a card. The perpetrators drew a picture of a man with a monk haircut and a taunt regarding the stolen data.

- Saeko was excited to take the job, as she stood up and talked, Yachi could not help but stare at Saeko's, ahem, impressive equipment. Yachi could hear the sound effect in her head as she watched those bounced in response to gravity. She looked down at her own breasts (or the lack of them) and despaired. Maybe she could get some scientific help from Date Heavy Industries for an upgrade ...

- Saeko thought they should totally get some perks from Date Heavy Industries. They could ask for some drills or rockets. Hey, good as weapons and excellent for self defense.

- Yachi was shocked... but maybe, just maybe, if worse comes to worst, she would consider the drills...

- Shimizu considered the drills.

- Asahi was shocked.

- In the next scene, the Angels returned to the office after failing to uncover more clues. Asahi suggested that they armed themselves with some weapons, because Date Heavy Industries had received another card. This time, the perpetrators drew a man with a mohawk and a... request: they wished to be beaten to a pulp by Shimizu.

- In the next scene, the Angels dressed in Qipao and infiltrated a hotel party. Hitoka spotted the Monk Haircut Man and the Mohawk Man, and lured them to a storage room. Shimizu appeared and was ready to fight... when the guys became very disappointed and upset as they noticed that Shimizu was not holding any weapon to beat them. So upset that ~~Noya~~ the Short Man, who had absolutely no role in this scene, barged into the storage room to complain about the lack of weapons too.

- Then the guys realized that without weapons, Shimizu would have to beat them with Karate. Dressed in Qipao. OMG she was going to TOUCH them. DIRECT SKIN CONTACT. *[It counts, right?]*

- The guys were ecstatic, Yachi warned Shimizu to not do what the enemies wanted, and Shimizu was at a complete loss as to what she should do.

- Saeko saved the day. With a rocket launcher. ("S, SIS?! Why is my sister here...!")

- In the final scene, the Angels + Asahi were relaxing on the beach and Crow spoke to them through a speaker. After Crow congratulated them on a job well done and signed off, Saeko asked Asahi to put sunscreen on her back. The Angels wondered what kind of person Crow was. Asahi mentioned that Crow wore glasses.

- Yachi wandered off and bumped into a man. The man straightened his glasses and spoke in poetry... just when Yachi realized who the man was and called for the others, the man left without a trace.

RANDOM THOUGHTS: I have never watched Charlie's Angel, haha.

